

Genealogical identities

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I am very grateful to have been asked to travel here to talk about journeys in the opposite direction in search of roots. I'll start with one story of a journey to think about land, place, culture and identity.

At the beginning of her account of her travels in Ireland, Rebecca Solnit writes of her sense of bemusement that her uncle's genealogical research has allowed her to become an Irish citizen. Her 'purple passport with its golden harp seems' for her 'less like a birthright than a slim book on the mythologies of blood, heritage and emigration' (Solnit, 1997, vii). Her book tells of two simultaneous journeys, one a loosely planned walk around Ireland, and the other an intellectual journey through questions of history, identity, cultures of colonisation, and mythologies of ancestry and belonging. Both trips take her physically to Ireland and imaginatively back to the streets and hills of the Californian suburb of her childhood. She locates her meditations on genealogy in both personal history and broader patterns of longing, nostalgia and self-fashioning. Solnit makes her travel an experience through which to think about forms of movement - exile, invasion, migration, nomadism, tourism - and discourses of belonging and stability - universalising, nationalist, nativist, regionalist, local - and rework their metaphors and meanings. She goes to Ireland to consider her sense of belonging in California, the ethnic choices of white Americans, the assumptions of cultural affinity that Irish ancestry provoke. By the end of her journey she gives up explaining her part Jewish and part Irish background, tired of defending her hybridity, and finds no firm foundation for her identity in Ireland. Her visit confirms her sense that being of Irish extraction is not the same as being an inhabitant of Ireland. Ireland, instead, complicates the meanings of native and home. This tale of travelling in search of roots, suggests that genealogy, for all its apparent promise of certainty, offers no guaranteed solutions to puzzles of belonging and identity.

As Solnit's account suggests, genealogy is a productive focus for engaging with popular and academic versions of the links between land, culture, place and identity. But genealogy is also an unruly subject that cannot easily be contained. It is about significant places – family homes – and complex global networks of desire and imagination; it is about highly personal senses of self and collective versions of ethnicity and nationhood; it involves electronic searching and historical fragments, ideas of blood and genetics and cultural memory; it is motivated by searches for cultural pedigree and senses of loss; shaped by privilege and shot through with uncertainty. Historically it has been bound up with lineage and pedigree, property and inheritance, but its popular forms are also closely linked to family history and the recovery of 'hidden histories' of women, of working class people, and others who are marginalised in mainstream and official histories, famously in the case of the United States, African Americans inspired, as others were, by Alex Haley's 'Roots'. But its promises of identity can turn out to be unreliable.

Genealogy is a practice which joins imaginative self-making and a guarantee of truth about individual identity and ethnicity. The genealogical quest to know with certainty 'who you are' and 'where you come from' by knowing your ancestors suggests a primordial and predetermined identity that can be simply uncovered. Genealogy promises a neat and satisfying pre-given and pre-determined collective identity, 'Irishness' for example, guaranteed by descent; at the same time it offers the potential pleasures of choosing an 'authentic' identity, in identifying, for example, with one surname, clan or ethnicity amongst the range in a family tree, that in intensely consumerist economies comes already

commodified with the customised paraphernalia of headed paper, crests, t-shirts, cups, or tea towels marked with heraldic insignia. Genealogical identities are scientifically proven in genetic testing, imaginatively reconstructed through family stories, documented with empirical evidence; both commodified and 'true'.

Proliferating in computer files, genealogical charts, and note books, illustrated with photographs and enriched by stories, family trees which stretch back in time and across space to Ireland are products of historical and contemporary transnational flows as well as personal desire. They are shaped by patterns of European migration and produced through the contemporary global flows of information, culture and tourism. The shape of a family tree, whether it takes the form of notes, computer files, customised charts, aligned horizontally or vertically, covering a wall, rolled up, pasted together as lines are added, is the product of choice and chance, privilege and luck, data availability and affective connections. In every step of the process choices about whose line to follow continually bifurcate – the mother's first or the father's, the maternal or paternal grandmother or maternal or paternal grandfather – and so endlessly backwards in time, posing questions of the value of certain lines over others, that are linked to family stories, ethnic choices, imaginative identification, cultural politics. The family tree is both an intimate diagram of descent with all its evocative and secretive names and dates and a 'material-semiotic' "object of knowledge" '. Like the 'gene' for Donna Haraway, the family tree is a 'knot of knowledge making practices, industry and commerce, popular culture, social struggles, psychoanalytic formations, bodily histories, human and non-human actors, local and global flows, inherited narratives, new stories, syncretic technical/cultural processes, and more' (Haraway, 1997,129). Genealogy, for those who travels thousands of miles to trace Irish roots, is also clearly about geography.

Genealogy is both about exploring histories of social relationships defined through blood and about geographical imaginations and senses of location, place and belonging defined through these roots. My focus here is also on a specific geography of genealogy, which Ireland is a key node is a much wider social, electronic and imaginative network that links Ireland to Australia, Canada, the United States and New Zealand and other places. For people who travel to trace Irish, and more widely European roots, genealogy links places through their relation to a personal past constructed through patterns of births and familial relations extending back from the present day individual. The genealogical work contemporary descendants of European migrants do in travelling to search for Irish 'roots', is as much about the issues of nationhood, ethnicity and belonging in these former settler colonies as it is about Irish cultural politics. Tracing Irish roots links locations where questions of belonging, authenticity, ethnicity are shaped by the broad processes and specific patterns of European migration and settlement, colonisation, nationalism, and new migrations of the late twentieth century. Their journeys in search of roots, the genealogical identities they express, and the family trees that chart genealogical relations across space as well as back in time, are rich sources for exploring popular and academic versions of place and identity in interconnected but also specific post-colonial locations.

Both migration in the past and contemporary genealogical travel are intimately connected to the micro-politics of the nation-state, in Ireland and in the countries where Irish people settled and from where their descendants travel to search for roots. In both 'origin' and 'destination', ideas of ethnicity, nationhood and collective cultural identity have been, and continue to be, shaped and informed by imaginative and material travels between both places. The turn to European and specifically Irish roots is deeply embedded in the specific configuration of discourses of 'race', ethnicity, cultural difference, cultural identity and multiculturalism in North America, Australia and New Zealand. For those positioned between the 'First Nations' and the recent migrants of the late 20th and early 21st century, genealogy is an appealing tool

for navigating through tangled questions of culture and belonging. In settler colonial contexts in which ideas of home, roots, belonging, authenticity, and the indigenous are so loaded by the histories of colonisation, settlement and the fate of indigenous people as well as more recent migrations, genealogical versions of ethnicity are inextricably bound up with the shaping of postcolonial identities. At the same time, as different versions of Ireland 'come home' with the growth of Irish roots tourism, discourses of genealogy and diaspora are being put to work to rethink history, culture and identity in Ireland. Researching a personal family history is always also, although in varied ways, about understanding the collective present. This genealogy is at once a reflection of uneven patterns of wealth and opportunity and differentiated forms of mobility, and stories told by elderly relatives, senses of mortality, loss, nostalgia and bereavement, nameless figures in old family photographs, letters in boxes of family memorabilia, memories of memories, fragmentary and elusive. Macro and micro of histories and geographies meet in the family tree.

Yet, the growing numbers of people searching for Irish and other roots ironically coincides with the critical shift away from ideas of cultural origins and rootedness to cultural movement and travel and from the certainties of stable, secure and fixed individual and collective cultural identities to hybrid, relational, contingent and fluid identities, captured in the well known distinction between grounded 'roots' and 'routes' of travel as metaphors for understanding culture and identity. In response to racism, ethnic fundamentalism, and global experiences of cultural dislocation, much recent work in cultural theory has questioned the traditional idealization of unified culture and fixed residence looked for alternative models of culture and identity through tracing geographies of movement, dispersal and spatial interconnections. These new critical frameworks of understanding draw on the concept of diasporic identities - senses of cultural community that override the boundaries of the nation state - and move from the metaphor of 'roots' with its sense of ethnic or cultural purity and timeless tradition grounded in place, to 'routes' and its evocation of circuits of culture and the mobility and fluidity of culture and identity. This has been very important and necessary work. Yet critique of certain versions of the relationship between place, land, culture and identity - in the model of the nation-state, and in the cultural discourses of primitivism, the geographical imaginations of the exotic or the Orient, in environmental determinism - has tended to characterise the expression of attachment to places as necessarily dangerously romantic and regressive. While essentialist versions of place, identity, nationhood have been deconstructed in cultural theory, loving places still seems essentially problematic. I want to focus on roots here to upset this assumption of what attachment to places can mean.

Instead of simply endorsing the orthodox opposition between supposedly politically progressive ideas of rootlessness and the supposedly regressive idea of roots, this paper considers genealogy as a practice through which ideas of personal, familial, collective, ethnic and sometimes national senses of culture, location and identity are shaped, imagined, articulated and enacted. It explores the ways genealogy can be as a personal engagement with, as well as a retreat from, difficult questions of identity, ethnicity and belonging. I want to both denaturalise genealogy, to question its language of blood and genes and easy ethnicity, and explore the 'cultures of relatedness' it produces; to both make genealogy strange and to see what it means and what it does. While one direction of recent work in new kinship studies is to 'widen the possibilities of what can count as kinship out from under the long shadow of genealogy and biology' (Franklin, in press, 440) another is to explore what genealogical versions of relatedness do to wider understandings of ethnicity and nationhood. This focus on genealogy may provide ways of thinking about located identities, belonging and emotional and affective relationships to places that are critical and constructive rather than either cynical and dismissive or sentimental and apolitical. I want to consider the implications of genealogical versions of identity, ethnicity and cultural location for imagining

post-colonial models of belonging. Genealogy is figured in particular ways in cultural theory, the post-colonial politics of culture in Ireland, and in the practices of visitors to Ireland in search of roots. This paper begins to trace these configurations of identity, place and belonging.

But let me be clear. This is in no way a simple recuperation of blood and soil models of belonging. There is much about genealogy that tempers any exploration of its potential. Most significantly, it is the mapping of degrees of relation through blood and genes that problematises genealogy as the foundation of collective identity and ethnicity.

Troubling genealogy

The work of tracing ancestry is not necessarily tied to racialised and gendered identities based on genetic essentialism. Yet the primacy given to blood relations and genetic inheritance in ancestral research means that genealogy can easily be used to support a model of care and affinity based on biological connection. More generally, genealogy can help propagate discourses of genetic essentialism that are so easily co-opted in socio-biology and popular science to explain and legitimate social practices, structures, values and relations; parenthood, femininity, masculinity, heterosexuality, the nuclear family, competitive individualism, 'the survival of the fittest', or most recently, the 'selfish gene'. But the conventionally masculinist and heterosexist aspects of genealogy do not necessarily need a genetic basis. Since the vital nodes in the family tree are heterosexual and reproductive couplings that produce offspring, those who do not reproduce for whatever reason are genealogical dead ends. Family trees have to be creatively modified to adequately include the familial relationships that result from adoption, or from new reproductive technologies, surrogacy or sperm donation for example, or same sex parenting. The language of ancestry and descent traditionally privileges the patrilineal line of descent registered in the surname over any other. Though popular genealogy is often more inclusive, according to strict rules of genealogical terminology, a bygone member of a family who had no offspring, is nobody's ancestor and therefore has no descendants'; a family 'consists of people of the same surname and blood, i.e. those descended in an all male line from a common male ancestor' and not a person's maternal lines; a family tree is a 'chart showing one or more male-line descents from a single male ancestor' and should not be confused with a Total Blood Descent chart which includes all lines of descent, male and female (FitzHugh, 1988, 13-14). In stories of how people become interested in their family history through listening to the stories of older female relatives women are often simultaneously central, albeit in a fairly conventional role, as transmitters of culture and memory and marginalised in research based on one family surname and strangely positioned in Single Family Surname Societies or Clan Gatherings.

But, the most pejorative connotations of genealogy come from the way ideas of collective identity based on 'blood', 'race' and ancestry have been joined to territory, mostly obviously in the model of the nation-state but also at other spatial scales. The 'sedentary metaphysics' (Malkki, 1994, 31) of a racially 'rooted' community, which pathologises difference within and outside its spatial borders, has taken a particularly virulent and violent form in what Paul Gilroy describes as the 'desperate cartography of the nation state' (Gilroy, 1990, 119) with its homogenising and exclusive language of pure and primordial cultures and races assigned to politically differentiated spaces. Gilroy's model of the diasporic identities is the most famous alternative.

Gilroy's conceptualisation of the diaspora as a sub-national and transnational, non-territorial collective identity challenges what he describes as the 'sedentary poetics of either soil or blood' (1997, 317) in which land, soil, genes, blood, culture, residence and political affiliation ideally coincide within the boundaries of the nation-state. Yet, in contrast to the tendency to

valorise mobility over rootedness in contemporary cultural theory, Gilroy's critique of ideas of origins, fixity and cultural purity in racism, the nation-state and the ethnic fundamentalism of some forms of Black political culture, does not entail disposing of ideas of shared points of departure and shared forms of experience in favour of absolutely indeterminate identities. Diasporic identities challenge the codes of modern citizenship because they are based on multiple identifications and multiple belongings always in motion between the place of residence and other places. Diaspora consciousness manages the tension between the bonds of shared experience and cultural heterogeneity, between feelings of affinity and senses of difference. It offers 'a more complex, ecologically sophisticated and organic concept of identity than offered by the contending options of genealogy and geography' (1997, 323). Diaspora, he argues, does not simply celebrate mobility, dispersal and the sea over rootedness, fixity and land but provides an alternative to this opposition. Diaspora, he suggests, provides a way to 'comprehend the dynamics of identity and belonging constituted between the poles of geography and genealogy' (1997, 327). Instead of simple return to origins, diaspora consciousness is based on the 'social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration' (1997, 318). Diaspora offers a ready alternative to the stern discipline of conceptions of identity rooted in primordial kinship. It rejects the popular image of wholly natural nations, spontaneously endowed with self-consciousness, tidily composed of symmetrical families; those interchangeable collections of ordered bodies that produce absolutely distinctive cultures. ... As an alternative to the metaphysics of 'race', nation and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location and consciousness. (Gilroy, 1997, 328)

While the direction of much recent work in cultural theory and critique is towards imagining forms of collectivity, solidarity and affiliation that do not depend on pre-given familial, genetic or kinship connection, the appeal of the family tree persists. Instead of dismissing the powerful allure of a personal, shared and self-centred narrative, and of incomplete but evocative family stories, I want to think about what happens when questions of nationality, ethnicity and identity meet in the practice of genealogy in Ireland and other places. I am most qualified to comment on the Irish context but I hope what I have to say also addresses broader questions of culture, identity and location. Ireland is clearly a particular sort of post-colonial context, with a specific colonial history, complex relationship to European colonisation and particular post-independence political conflict and cultural politics. But the questions of who belongs and what places can mean and for whom in Ireland, resonate more widely.

Genealogy and diasporic Irishness

Though genealogy has been deployed in problematic models of ethnically pure nations, genealogy can have a more complicated relationship to the nation. In both economic development projects and in Irish cultural politics, ideas of dispersal and rootedness, diaspora and genealogy are worked together rather than kept apart. Stimulated in part by the exploration of the Famine and post-Famine migration with the 150th anniversary commemorations, the concept of the Irish diaspora emerged in the 1990s as a prominent and sometimes controversial theme within popular and academic discourses on Irish identity. This interest in the diaspora coincided with the development of Irish genealogical projects in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Irish Genealogical Project was established in 1988 to develop a network of regional country-based centres to computerise local genealogical records and provide research facilities and support in order to promote 'genealogy tourism' and creative local employment and training opportunities. There are pragmatic economic and political reasons for these developments.

The appeal of inward investment or tourist revenue from now wealthy descendants of Irish migrants is matched by attempts to re-figure ideas of Irishness as diasporic, diverse, and dynamic rather than single, rooted, essential and fixed and so contribute to the resolution of conflict in Northern Ireland. Most famously, during her presidency Mary Robinson evoked the idea of a diverse international Irish community to highlight the different and hybrid versions of Irish identity amongst descendants of Irish migrants across the world and to call for more inclusive approaches to cultural identity and cultural diversity in Ireland, symbolically marked by her gesture of lighting a welcoming and commemorative candle for the Irish diaspora in the window of her presidential palace. Prompted, to a large extent by her presidential manifesto, the revision to Article 2 of the Irish constitution formulated in the Good Friday Peace Agreement (1998) and ratified in referenda in Northern Ireland and the Republic, included the explicit and official sanction of the discourse of the Irish diaspora with the words: - 'the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage..'

Mary Robinson's promotion of the idea of the Irish Diaspora also reflected a wider and longer critical project, prompted by recent decades of economic and social change as well as conflict in Northern Ireland, to rethink Irish national identity through a focus on the circuits of people and cultural forms between Ireland and other places that have shaped ideas of Irishness. This challenge to the image of Ireland as culturally pure and an isolated island on the edge of Europe has involved exploring the cultural and social implications of the Ireland's contemporary permeable economic, political and cultural borders and the long histories of connection between Ireland, continental Europe and further afield. Geographical interconnection forged through migration is the basis of Richard Kearney's attempt to reconceptualise Irish identity as 'post-national' and through his concept of the Fifth Province, to undermine the idea of a necessary relationship between territoriality and cultural identity.

For Kearney, the Fifth Province is 'not a fixed point or centralized power' nor 'the source of some "unitary and indivisible sovereignty" ' but a metaphor of 'a network of relations extending from local communities at home to migrant communities abroad' (1997, 100). For Kearney Irish identity can draw on a sense of regional identification, membership of a state and sense of connection with an international Irish community. It is the very different configurations of these axes of identity within the Irish Diaspora world wide that make it possible to conceptualise cultural diversity within a cultural category like Irishness in Ireland. Ireland, he argues can be re-imagined as a 'migrant nation'. The nation can be thought of as an 'extended family'. If, he argues 'over seventy million people in the world today claim to be of Irish descent, it is evident that this definition of nationality, or at least of national genealogy, extends far beyond the borders of a state or territory' (1997, 5). This genealogy of an extended 'national' family undermines the mapping of pure ethnic patterns onto spatially discrete nations. Rather than figure genealogical roots and routes of travel as politically opposed models of culture, both ideas of genealogy and diaspora are being deployed imaginatively and practically in Irish cultural politics.

In her opening address at the first Irish Genealogical Congress held in Dublin in 1991 Mary Robinson praised the conference organisers for embracing in their programme 'Irish people from every era who left these shores, whatever their class, creed or reason for leaving', for including the neglected stories of Jewish, Huguenot and Quaker minorities in Ireland that complicate the usual focus on the island's two or three major traditions, and for emphasising the diversity of migrant experience and its cultural expression world wide. So while the idea of forced and painful exile has been part of Irish nationalist discourses of colonial injustice, now ideas of diaspora are being used to rethink nationhood. And through romantic views of

Ireland as a culturally homogenous Catholic rural society have been at least in part a product of migrant imaginations, now genealogy is being used to question the simplicities and exclusions of this version of Irish identity.

The notion of the Irish diaspora is deployed in these ways to emphasise both inclusiveness and difference. Yet it has also been criticised for constructing an image of undifferentiated global community, for dismissing the painful experiences of Irish migrants, for naturalising migration with Irish society. Most general accounts ignore the gendered experiences and discourses of migration. Furthermore it appears very often as an exclusively Catholic diaspora so that Irish identity, even refigured as diasporic, is implicitly coupled again with religious affiliation. Protestants of various denominations 'have largely been squeezed out of [recent] histories of the diaspora'.

Ideas of the Irish diaspora can also support the model of a single ethnic identification. The frequently quoted figure of seventy million people of Irish descent world wide seems to conjure up an uncomplicated notion of pure descent in the generations that followed migration, or that all other ethnicities in a post-migration family tree are over ridden, ignored or subsumed with the Irish line. Identity it seems, is a matter of naturally and simply being Irish and Irish alone if an ancestor came from Ireland. Allowing for multiple senses of identification or inter-ethnic ancestry messes up the figures for Irish descendants worldwide. So the easy invocation of the diaspora can promote notions of simple ethnicity that the concept of diaspora itself is meant to dispel. Ironically, the appeal of a straightforward and single ethnic identity can be prompted by popular discourses of multi-culturalism and diaspora. When the economically pragmatic and politically well-intentioned invocation of the Irish diaspora and Irish roots travels from Ireland and meets the discourses of race and ethnicity in the United States for example, the focus on white ethnicities that can result is not always progressive. Questions of ethnic difference can be depoliticised in the search for a differentiated white ethnicity. The 'sentimentalising and fetishising desire' of Irish Americans 'to establish their genealogy in the old country' David Lloyd argues, 'has been augmented recently by the successes of liberal 'multiculturalism', which has left many white Americans, whose roots are now entangled in the soil of several European lands, seeking the cultural distinctiveness that they have learned to be the privilege of ethnic minorities'.

Without losing any critical sense of the politics of identity and ethnicity in Ireland or elsewhere, but instead of readily dismissing the desire, longing and nostalgic appeal of genealogy as only 'sentimentalising and fetishising' and always politically dubious, I want to ground cultural theories of diaspora and their specific configuration in Irish cultural politics in the practices of those who travel to do Irish genealogies.

Doing genealogy

The visitors to Ireland in search of roots varied in their motives, commitment, attitudes and expectations. People came in search of citizenship and access to European markets and favourable income tax arrangements, to satisfy intense longings, or with casual curiosity; arrive with a couple of hours on a coach tour scheduled in for a quick visit to the genealogical centre and the hope of instant ancestry, or after years of saving and searching. But for many doing genealogy in Ireland was about 'finding out where they came from' knowing 'who they are' of 'exploring their Irishness'. Most shared a desire for connection, to match something in themselves to another place and people. Searching for ancestors' dates of birth, marriage and death and details of land and property owned or rented, was about learning a family history but also a search for a significant location within Ireland - a county, a village, a townland, a farm or a cottage. The search for significant places was often also a search for living relatives. Phonebooks become resources as genealogical visitors manage to identify a

significant place and then ring up people with the relevant surname in the hope of help or direction or ideally a genealogical connection.

Many of the visitors I spoke talked about their strong feelings of being in the country or the specific places of their ancestors, about seeing faces in the crowd like their family members. These expectations of intimacy, affinity, family likeness, of finally being in the place that matters were sometimes translated into bodily registers, as 'shivers down the spine' and 'goose bumps' confirmed the significance of matching up genealogy and geography. For others visiting was an experience of failed connection, sometimes with people, sometimes simply with the land itself. While fuelled both by hopeful desire for connection and by assumptions of automatic affinity, doing genealogy and their encounters with other people, professional genealogists and distant living relatives, as could be a process of learning a more complicated personal and wider history.

Genealogical diversity

People coming to Ireland to do genealogy often found their ideas of personal identity and Irish history complicated by in the process. In contrast to the frequent assumptions that all migrants were poor and oppressed by wealthy English landlords, researchers would find evidence of a middle-class in Ireland and a stratified rather than polarised society, occupational diversity, intermarriage, denominational changes and mixed backgrounds in their family trees. In other cases visitors assumed a shared anti-colonial or anti-English perspective, commenting on the wicked English or apologising for having English relations, but find these perspectives not shared or supported by many people they encountered, especially professional genealogists.

Being related to people in Ireland could also turn out to challenge the assumption of shared identity transferred through genes and blood. Meetings between visitors and living distant relations however much invested with meaning could turn out to be uneasy occasions mediated by differences in wealth and culture. As one visitor put it someone may 'on paper a relative but in person a stranger'. The arrival of the returned is still often classically framed by fears of unexpected claims to land, cottages and farms. In another case the elderly farmer was simply unwilling to be incorporated into an American couple's dream and hid behind the farm. Happier encounters can be based on colluding with these desires - a priest somewhere apparently shows all visitors the same ruined cottage, families warmly receiving visitors they know aren't really related. In other cases the visited are more vulnerable as people claiming to be relatives arrive and then rush off again to do more genealogy. Even long and sustained relationships between families in Ireland and distant relations are mediated by the usual family tensions because of differences in attitude, culture, and class. Her distant cousins in Ireland, one visitor told me turned out to be like any family, 'some great and others are ok just like any other group'.

More complex personal histories can also mean more complex Irish histories. The genealogical work of overseas visitors has stimulated interest in conventionally overlooked aspects of Irish history – those stories edited out of the traditional narratives of Irish history; a elderly nun coming to Dublin to try to discover something about her grandfather who was awarded a Victoria Cross in the Crimean war but who could never be spoken of; a man following the painful tracks of his grandfather who had joined up and fought in the First World War but who left Ireland after being ostracised on his return in the 1920s, people trying to trace ancestors who were institutionalised as orphans or unmarried mothers. Here genealogy works in its radical mode, uncovering hidden histories that challenge the exclusions of nationalist histories of neat identities and absolute loyalties. By finding, recovering and drawing attention to more flexible versions of loyalty, identity and belonging

in the past and the present, visitors can offer alternative models of cultural identity for Ireland – the possibilities of complex multi-located senses belonging and culture that refuse the simple answers to questions of home and origins. An American Mormon was determined to tell her child equally of its German, Irish, Scottish and Korean ancestry and so share her multi-ethnic ancestral consciousness. One New Zealander was adamant that doing family history in no way ‘downgrades’ how she feels about her own country and used both her Irish ancestry and borrows /appropriates Maori expressions of family, home and belonging to locate herself firmly in New Zealand. A Canadian visitor spoke of combining a sense of geographic roots in Canada and genealogical roots elsewhere, and like others too who stress the narratives that links places and people, of engaging not just in a search for names and dates but for a contextual history of their lives. Doing genealogy in order to trace links to Ireland could also lead a greater senses of the complexities of ancestry and ethnicity in more recent personal and collective histories.

In genealogical research centres the emotion of hope, loss, nostalgia and desire meet the ethos of rigorous empiricism. In order to combat the legacy of spurious and status hungry genealogies of the past, over the 20th century genealogy has become increasingly professionalised through accredited organisations and societies with codes of good practice and models of rigorous genealogical research. The key to good genealogy is primary documentation; each link in the family tree starting with the self and working systematically backwards must be fully documented. Immediate family members and their knowledge should be the first resource rather than general maps or guides to surnames. Visitors arriving in Ireland in search of genealogical details about a great grandmother or great grandfather for example, are encouraged to start with themselves to make sure that the links to the Irish ancestor are accurate and supported by evidence. This emphasis on properly establishing the links to Irish ancestors means that visitors are encouraged to research more recent generations that are often over looked and often more ethnically mixed. The precision of genealogy and the strictures of the professional demand that searchers start with themselves and work backwards, can challenge some of the neatness of a kind of idealised Irish identity, in which a single Irish line is the only one that matters, by pointing to the ethnic diversity of generations that followed the arrival of the Irish ancestor - as one Canadian put it the ‘Italian and Mexican and Chinese and East Indian and all sorts of colourful mixtures’. It certainly dispels the claim made less frequently these days, that a surname proves descent from an ancient Gaelic chieftain or Norman Lord. In Derry, one visitor from England told me he had always thought of himself as a ‘rebel’ from Co. Clare with its strong republican traditions, but doing genealogy found he was a descendant of an English man involved in settlement of Londonderry. His ‘English’ mother turns out to be descended from Huguenots in Dublin. All this and finding Presbyterian, Protestant and Catholic in one generation of his ancestry, he said, ‘makes all this sectarian stuff nonsense’. For others the language of ethnic fractions – a 1/4, 3/4s, 1/6, 3/8s Irish, German, Scottish, Cree in endless configuration – describes a happy or disappointing fragmented ethnicity. Like other forms of data collection, genealogy is driven by a desire for comprehensiveness that can stretch the family tree laterally in every generation to include other offspring each potentially with their own descendant chart. Amateur genealogists so often described genealogy pathologically, as an infection, an obsession, a bug you catch and cannot shake off. And so even those who begin with a straightforward sense of their roots are taken in new directions though the desire to know more. Having exhausted her research on her Catholic ancestors another American woman told me that she then turned to her Protestant side and realised their formerly overlooked significance in her family. Genealogy could also lead to a more critical historical perspective and a sense of interconnected histories. A woman born in Northern Ireland of Protestant and Catholic parents, and now living in England, and linked through shared stories, letters and genealogical connections to families in Southern Ireland and Australia, told of how

genealogy keeps stimulating her to learn about the impacts of capitalism, colonialism and post-colonialism, as her family tree intersects with the history of Highland Clearances or the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia.

Northern Irish Roots

Though this sense of complexity through genealogy has implications for Irish cultural politics throughout Ireland, its significance is probably most immediate in Northern Ireland, where ideas of home, native, ancestral roots, migration, settlement and colonisation are intensely charged. Attempts to resolve the conflict by creating more inclusive versions of belonging in Northern Ireland must find an alternative to traditional nationalist claims to origins, cultural purity, homogeneity and indigenesness. The powerful anti-colonial claim of ancient residence secured by geographical and genealogical roots – as expressed in the story of the eighteenth-century tenant who responds to the arrogance of an English landlord with the words ‘I am no fool, I know my genealogy’ (Gillespie 1993, 123) - has to be reformulated to accommodate new forms of belonging. Genealogy, here, is also now part of complex post-colonial politics with its double critique of colonialism and nationalism.

Family history in Northern Ireland complicates the standard model of the overseas visitors coming to Ireland to trace ancestors and to find an Irish connection. Most genealogy being done in Northern Ireland by resident Protestant, Presbyterian and other Non-Conformist people who descended from the 16th and 17th ‘planter stock’ that settled in Ulster during its Plantation. Their work involves tracing generations of residence in Northern Ireland and ultimately to trace genealogical links back to Scotland and sometimes ancestral branches of family that moved to the ‘New World’. So while the date of emigration of an ancestor from Ireland is the hinge around which family history opens forward to the present and backwards in history for overseas visitors, for many in Northern Ireland the crucial date is the arrival of an ancestor in Ireland. This research both back to Scotland and forward to the New World is matched by efforts to rewrite Canadian and American histories of in-migration include the mainly Presbyterian migrants who left Ulster in the eighteenth century, in response to their absence from the popular discourses of a Catholic Irish diaspora, and to mark this movement in the heritage spaces of Northern Ireland. It is now possible to visit the humble rural homesteads of ‘Planter families’ who subsequently migrated to America.

But most significantly, this genealogy is also about articulating and shaping a historical and geographical imagination that is made up of sense of difference and belonging – expressing ethnic difference in Ulster through the strong link to Scotland, and forging a valid sense of belonging in Ulster through knowing the genealogy of generations of ancestors who have lived there after their arrival in the 16th and 17th century. As one genealogist explained, genealogy for Ulster ‘planter families’ is a way of dealing with being defined as ‘not belonging in an ancient land’. This genealogy of belonging and difference is linked to a broader movement to rethink Ulster Unionism as Britishness dissolves as a stable identity with the challenge of devolution and federalism in Scotland and Wales, and Unionist commitment to unity and loyalty seems increasingly dispensable to mainland Britain and Westminster. In the strange and sometimes contradictory politics of genealogy, the focus on Protestant migrants from Ulster by those whose research is prompted by anxieties about the ‘invasion’ of contemporary migrations and the apparent erosion of the founding histories of the United States, contributes to the shaping of new Unionist identities of belonging in Northern Ireland - genealogy used to try to protect a white version of American nationhood in one context, and to challenge exclusive versions of belonging in another.

In the study tours and archives where amateur genealogists from Northern Ireland and overseas meet and share stories, research support and resources, the practice of research

involves encountering all the complexity of shared, different and cross cutting identities and identifications. Visitors could find tense and troubling expressions of ethnic difference where they expected affinity. Professional genealogists recounted stories of American clients who kept repeatedly unknowingly offending living distant relations that had been found in Northern Ireland by referring to the importance of these Irish roots, when the family emphatically defined themselves as British. Another Irish-American client wrote with dismay that the distant relations could challenge her categorisation of them as Irish 'after all the suffering of the Famine'. Visitors to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland sometimes arrive visibly proclaiming their Irishness with shamrocks and slogans on sweatshirts and wind-sheeters where local researchers are busy tracing different genealogical identities in Ulster and to Scotland. The spectrum of identities amongst those who come together to do genealogy in Ireland often becomes apparent in specific places and moments. In Derry the tourist guide who walked the city walls with a group of genealogical visitors with Scots-Irish and Irish Catholic American backgrounds, joked about two stories place and ethnicity - one of the war in Ireland between a Dutch and Scottish king for the rule of England, and the other of a recent occasion when the white supremacist British Nationalist Party and a Ghanaian Apprentice Boy's Lodge joined local Lodges to commemorate the Siege of Derry. These stories seemed to fragment the meaning of an Irish connection and politicise the genealogical work of identity making.

But across these differences overseas visitors claiming Irish roots and local researchers from broadly Unionist British tradition were linked by shared desire to find ancestry and origins. In their concern with ethnicity and identity many visitors searching for roots in Ireland had more in common with Protestant people search for roots in Ulster and back to Scotland. For descendants of Presbyterian migrants to the American south east and to Canada who retained a 'Scotch Irish' identity, their interest in ancestry in Ulster and again ultimately Scotland, links them to local researchers, but who often resolutely reject the term 'Scotch Irish' in favour of 'Ulster Scots'. Most, significantly however, even if researchers start with fairly neat models of ethnicity and cultural difference doing genealogy in Northern Ireland can lead to a greater sense of the interconnected and shared histories in Ulster. The family trees that track intermarriage and denominational changes across generations diminish histories of absolute and antagonistic difference.

The maps of Irish surnames that are often the (poor) starting point of genealogical research for overseas visitors in search of Irish roots do not usually include the names of 'Planter' families. In order to at least begin to redress this, Irish World the Family History research centre in Dungannon, Co.Tyrone, has recently produced a map of this county in Northern Ireland which includes 'Planters' names and so registers Planter families and Planter experiences as part of Ulster history, rather than as a problem of Ulster history. Mapping these names symbolically locates their descendants in Ulster, and helps mitigate the feelings of expressed by one genealogist who could trace his family back to 1714 but whose 'planter' surname seems to invalidate his sense of belonging. But surnames themselves, as I was often reminded, defy maps of religious or political affiliation, as do the famous cases of the Hume, Adams, Flannagan, Sands, and MacGuinness names. As one professional genealogist insisted 'There is no pure blood existing in this country'.

In their genealogical work the Ulster Historical Foundation try to convey the complex reasons that ancestors had for leaving rather than simply landlord oppression and emphasise the regional diversity of Irish history. This means using historical documents to tell stories both of regional difference and ethnic integration. Griffith's Valuation, one of the most important genealogical resources originated as a survey of property for evaluation of rents and rateable values to accompany the British cartographic survey of the 1840s. This

conventionally colonial document is now being deployed in post-colonial cultural politics as evidence for integrated settlement in the past in Northern Ireland. It is this sense of genealogy as a lesson in history which challenges the divisive generalisations of sectarian history, each side – Protestant-British and Catholic-Irish – having ‘different ancestors, different anniversaries, different wars’ (Buchanan, 1989, 52) that is being promoted along with local history in the Education for Mutual Understanding Programme established by the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council. John Winters, the director of the Irish Genealogical Project in Northern Ireland, argues that learning history through family history can ‘instil a knowledge and understanding about the interdependence of the different religious and cultural communities in Northern Ireland and the consequences of their integration and segregation’. The emphasis of the Education for Mutual Understanding Programme ‘is on understanding and evaluating the shared, diverse, and distinctive aspects of cultural heritage’ and for Winters ‘it is within this arena that Irish Genealogy has a definite purpose. Perhaps with the means to explore ethnic identity in real terms a new generation can break out of inherent misconceptions and realise the positive benefits of family history’ (Winters 1993, 26).

If there is anything useful in thinking of Irish identity and culture as diasporic, then the notion of an Irish diaspora needs to be refigured to include not just journeys away from Ireland but also in-migration as part of the history and culture of the island. It means imagining the origin or ‘centre’ as already diasporic or at least itself already shaped by migration into Ireland, from the plantation to the recent arrival of Eastern European refugees and ethnic minorities, who were ironically the subject of invasion panic at the same time that Irish famine migrants and their descendants are given so much attention. In this case the idea of ‘diasporic space’ displaces as language of origins while it allows for deep senses of belonging. This allows a sense of Ireland as transnational, transatlantic but also trans-Irish sea - between Ulster, Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. It was this sense of migration into as well as away from Ireland that was the theme of the conference and study tour organisation by the Ulster Historical Foundation in 1999: ‘Millennium Migrants -1000 years of invasion and emigration’. ‘Studying patterns of settlement from the Viking and Norman raiders to the returning émigrés of the 20th century’, the conference explored ‘the rich tapestry of civilisation and migration as it developed in this millennium’.

Conclusion

With its language of lineage, ancestry, descent, bloodlines, family trees, genes, branches and roots, genealogy seems far from the current critical language of cultural hybridity, movement, diasporas, and rhizomatic networks; more about the fixing cultural origins and membership than challenging the mandatory coincidence of blood, soil and political affiliation within the nation-state. Yet, despite the recent turn away from ideas of geographical rootedness in favour of new spatial metaphors of movement, the practice of searching for ancestors and the meanings ascribed to this work, can upset theoretical and personal understandings of cultural identity. Though ideas of diasporic dispersal are often contrasted to the ideas of origins, both the practices of ancestral research of those who travel from Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States to trace European and especially Irish roots, can complicate simple senses of cultural location and the apparently straight forward critique of discourses of genealogical roots and origins. For both individual and collective identities, genealogical projects can have unpredictable outcomes. Those who readily dismiss genealogy may be surprised by some of its results.

Tracking the flows of genealogical desire between Ireland and other places reveals the contradictory and spatially differentiated cultural politics of genealogy. In Ireland, genealogy can work to challenge the legacy of anti-colonial nationalism and its discourses of ethnic and cultural purity, revealing diversity, uncovering interconnection, charting complexity. In

Northern Ireland especially, genealogy is being used by 'planter stock' to forge new positive senses of identity that are about belonging and difference, senses of cultural location in Ulster and cultural connection with Scotland, and to trace shared histories that challenge the absolute opposition between 'planter' and 'Gael'. Genealogy can both open up alternatives and return to the absolute certainties of blood and soil. Yet it is often in the moments when connections through blood are claimed and asserted as relatives meet, that the limits of biological connection as source of intimacy and affinity become most apparent. The politics of belonging in Ireland and in Australia, New Zealand and North America are mutually informing.

Though often prompted by a sense of uneasy location between the claims of the indigenous and the 'invasion' of new migrants, the genealogical work of white settlers can problematise notions of racial purity by revealing the thoroughly hybrid nature of the family tree. While many continue to skip back in time to focus on an Irish ancestor and use this as the basis of romantic identification with Ireland, many others encouraged by the rules of proper genealogy, find that their own family trees figure the 'antagonistic intimacy' of the European settlers and indigenous people in settler societies – resistance to as well as insistence on racialised boundaries, hierarchies of ethnicity amongst migrant groups and discourses of miscegenation. Genealogy can lead to a more politicised and historicised sense of location, that acknowledges the impacts of European settlement, and refuses the choice between sense of belonging in the place of residence and attachment to other places. Rebecca Solnit returned from her journey around Ireland with a sense of deeper connection to California, a connection strengthened by greater historical consciousness. Storied landscapes, made meaningful through the mix of personal and collective histories, should she argues, replace an kind of spatial amnesia that forgets local histories in the fascination with Ireland. These narratives should include the processes of colonisation, and for Solnit, the bloody histories which shaped the American West. A sense of location is deepened rather than simply invalidated by this sense of the past. The politicisation but not invalidation of settler belonging is one version of a post-colonial politics place and identity.

As I explained in my introduction, this focus on genealogy, the bad side of the couplet of 'roots' and 'routes' in cultural theory, is framed by a broader project of trying to think about the relationships between land, culture, place and identity in ways that are neither cynical and dismissive of people's attachment to place nor simply romantic and celebratory. A critical but also constructive approach to located identities, it seems, means exploring the geographies of the politics of land, place, culture and identity. It requires a spatial sensitivity to the ways in which claims to belong through genealogical roots have different politics in different places. This means challenging the nation-states language of cultural purity based on genealogy in some places and respecting the political claims of those long residents displaced by colonial settlement in others. Tracing the results of genealogical desire between Ireland and Australia begins to show something of these specific and interconnected histories and geographies of culture, location and identity.

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Society and Space 20(1):27-52. Its themes have been dealt with more fully in the author's recent book **Of Irish Descent: Origin Stories, Genealogy, and The Politics of Belonging** (Syracuse University Press, 2008).

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